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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1143
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000615

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/18
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SUBJECT: PA EMPLOYEES REGULATIONS AND THE COURTS AGAINST
PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKERS

REF: JERUSALEM 588

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Fatah-led public employee unions staged a strike on April 7 and called for partial strikes for the remainder of the week. President Abbas (Abu Mazen) issued a decree allowing any party affected by public sector strikes to take those responsible to court. The PA cabinet has filed a request for an injunction to block the public employee union strikes. End Summary.

Strikes Continue

12. (C) Continuing a series of strikes intended to pressure PM Fayyad's government (reftel), the PA employees Union and the Palestinian Teachers Union staged strikes April 7-8. Ministry of Education contacts reported that about 15,000 teachers observed both days of the strike and schools will be required to "compensate" for the lost days. A senior Ministry of Health (MOH) official told Econoff that all MOH employees showed up for work April 8 and hospitals are functioning normally. Both unions are threatening partial strikes for the remainder of the week.

Dialogue Proposed

13. (C) Palestine Legislative Council (PLC) representatives met with PM Fayyad April 8 and proposed an initiative that would freeze PA measures against the strikers, suspend strikes for three days, and open a dialogue between the PA and union officials. While Fayyad reportedly agreed to the dialogue, he declined to suspend reductions in salaries of those failing to show up for work or to withdraw the request for an injunction until the strikes are called off. The head of the Fatah PLC bloc Azam al Ahmad characterized PA action against the unions as excessive.

Court to Decide

14. (C) In accordance with PM Fayyad's recommendation, Abu Mazen signed a decree April 6 allowing any party affected by the public sector strikes to take those responsible to court. The decree also requires that public sector unions adhere to rules governing private sector strikes, including a requirement that advance notice be given prior to any strike action. The PA cabinet subsequently filed a request for an injunction to block the strikes by the public sector unions.

A PA court ruling on the legality of the strikes is expected
in the next three days.
WALLES